

---

Douglas E. Bowers  
*Executive Editor*

For this issue:  
Karen S. Hamrick  
*Issue Editor*  
Alma Young  
*Graphics and Map Assistance*

Lindsay Mann  
Brenda Powell  
*Managing Editors*

Dale Simms  
*Editorial Assistance*

Cover photo: ERS photo.

*Rural Conditions and Trends* is published three times a year by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS). For subscription information, call ERS-NASS at 1-800-999-6779.

*Rural Conditions and Trends* welcomes letters to the editor as well as ideas for articles. Address editorial correspondence and inquiries to Editor, *Rural Conditions and Trends*, Room 324, 1301 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005-4788 (telephone 202-219-0484, after October 24, 202-694-5398).

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of public business required by law of the Department.

Contents of this journal may be reprinted without permission, but the editors would appreciate acknowledgment of such use and an advance copy of the material to be reprinted. Use of commercial and trade names does not imply approval or constitute endorsement by USDA.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's Target Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC, 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

*Rural Conditions and Trends* is printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink.

---

Starting October 24, 1997, the Economic Research Service will be moving to 1800 M Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20036-5831. All telephone numbers will change as a result of the move. Both authors' current and future telephone numbers are provided in this issue. E-mail addresses will remain the same.

# Rural Conditions and Trends

1997, Vol. 8, No. 2

- 4 Overview**
  - Rural Areas Continue To Benefit from the Economic Expansion*
- 6 National Economic Issues and Trends**
  - U.S. Economy Moderates in 1997*
- 9 Employment and Unemployment**
  - Employment Growth Rates Converge for Metro and Nonmetro Areas*
  - Employment Growth and Unemployment Rate Often Identify Different Counties as Prosperous*
  - Nonmetro Multiple Jobholding Rate Higher than Metro*
- 22 Earnings and Income**
  - Rural Earnings Edge Up in the 1990's*
  - Rural Median Household Income Increases*
  - Nonmetro Personal Income Increases in the 1990's*
  - Rural Poverty Rate Edges Downward*
  - Family Structure and Employment Characteristics Differentiate Poor from Near-Poor Workers*
  - Migration Contributes to Nonmetro Per Capita Income Growth*
- 46 Population**
  - Nonmetro Population Growth Rebound of the 1990's Continues, But at a Slower Recent Rate*
  - Nonmetro Elders Better Off than Metro Elders on Some Measures, Not on Others*
  - Fewer Immigrants Settle in Nonmetro Areas and Most Fare Less Well than Metro Immigrants*
- 66 Rural Well-being**
  - Births to Unmarried Mothers Are Rising Faster in Rural Areas*
  - Rural Housing Conditions Improve but Affordability Continues To Be a Problem*
- 75 Farm Labor**
  - Number of Hired Farmworkers Increases, but Their Median Weekly Earnings Show Little Improvement*
- 79 Farm Household Income and Wealth**
  - Farm Operator Household Income and Wealth Compare Favorably With All U.S. Households*
- 86 Appendix: Data Sources and Definitions**
- 93 Appendix: 1994 Current Population Survey Redesign**
- 96 Appendix Tables**